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ABSTRACT

Female identity is centered on interconnectedness, and it is often based on a secure attachment with the family. This study addressed the relationship between attachment and self-esteem in African American and White female college students. The Inventory of Parent and Peer Attachment (Armsden & Greenberg, 1987) was used to assess the cognitive or affective dimensions of students' relationships with their parents and close friends. The Self-Perception Profile for College Students (Neemann & Harter, 1986) was used to measure judgments of competence or adequacy in 12 separate dimensions. Questionnaires were distributed to 139 female college students. Overall results indicated positive correlations between attachment and self-esteem. Statistically significant racial differences were found when comparing attachments to fathers. White and African American females differed significantly in their attachments to their mothers and fathers. For both groups of females, attachments to mothers were higher than attachments to fathers. Two separate discriminant analyses indicated that African American females scored higher on social acceptance, intellectual ability, and physical appearance, whereas White females scored higher on close friendships and scholastic competence. Results are discussed in terms of the specific research questions asked. (Contains 77 references.) (Author/EMK)

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Attachment and self-esteem issues in the lives of female college students

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ABSTRACT

This study addressed the relationship between attachment and self-esteem in African American and White female college students. The Inventory of Parent and Peer Attachment (Armsden & Greenberg, 1987) was used to assess the cognitive or affective dimensions of students' relationships with their parents and close friends. The Self-Perception Profile for College Students (Neemann & Harter, 1986) was used to measure judgements of competence or adequacy in twelve separate dimensions. Questionnaires were distributed to 139 female college students.

Overall, results indicated positive correlations between attachment and self-esteem. Statistically significant racial differences were found when comparing attachments to fathers. White and African American females differed significantly in their attachments to their mothers and fathers. For both groups of females, attachments to mothers were higher than attachments to fathers. Two separate discriminant analyses indicated that African Americans scored higher on social acceptance, intellectual ability, and physical appearance, while the White females scored higher on close friendships and scholastic competence.

INTRODUCTION

Background of the problem

When first proposed, attachment theory was primarily associated with the parent-infant relationship. More current research has suggested the importance of attachment throughout the lifespan (Ainsworth, 1989). Secure attachment in the early years helps a child construct a healthy sense of self and an understanding of significant others that continues over the course of development. Secure attachment relationships lead to the development of internal working models that guide the emotional development of the child, and influence the child's understanding of and participation in other relationships (Bowlby, 1982).

Researchers have attempted to examine adolescent attachment relationships and adolescent development by focusing on how attachment promotes the adolescent's sense of self (Lackovic-Grgin, DeKovic & Opacic, 1994; Lopez & Gover, 1993; Paterson, Pryor & Field, 1995; Ryan & Lynch, 1989). Literature on self-esteem has maintained that the self is comprised of many selves that interact with each other to produce a consistent whole (Harter, 1988). Therefore, a sense of self is not only based on the perceptions of oneself, but also on the interactions one has with others. These interactions, if based on healthy attachments, may contribute to an adolescent's positive sense of self.

Research on attachment during the college years also has been conducted. Findings from various studies have suggested the importance of secure parent-student attachment (Armsden & Greenberg, 1987; Bell,Avery, Jenkins, Feld & Schoenrock, 1985; Kenny & Donaldson, 1991; Lapsley, Rice & FitzGerald, 1990), and how attachment and

perceived levels of support are related to a healthy sense of self (Armsden & Greenberg, 1987; Kenny & Donaldson, 1992; Schultheiss & Blustein, 1994).

Although research in the area of college student-parent relationships has substantiated the association between attachment and positive self-esteem, it has not clearly depicted the racial and socioeconomic influences on these two dimensions. Studies have attempted to discern racial differences in self-esteem (Clark & Clark 1947; Fleming, 1984; Hines & Berg-Cross, 1981; Martinez & Dukes; 1991; Mitchell & Fandt, 1995; Osborne & LeGette, 1982; Richman, Clark & Brown, 1985), body images (Akan & Grilo, 1995; Rucker & Cash, 1992) or racial identity (Parham & Helms, 1985a; 1985b; Phinney & Alipuria, 1990; Phinney & Onwughalu, 1996; Pyant & Yanico, 1991; Smith, Burlew, & Lundgren, 1991; Taub & McEwen, 1992). However, there has been a lack of research examining the relationship between self-esteem and attachment among African American and White females.

Research has tended to characterize female development as embedded in relationships and defined by dimensions of attachment (Chodorow, 1978; Gilligan, 1982, 1990; Miller, 1986; Surrey, 1991). Female identity is centered on interconnectedness, and is often based on a secure attachment with the family. Furthermore, the task of individuation for females is similarly characterized by the dimensions of separation and connection operating simultaneously (Apter, 1990; Gavazzi & Sabatelli, 1990; Gilligan, 1990; Rosenbaum, 1993; Yates, 1993; Zilbach, 1993). Research has noted, for instance, that women's sense of identity development occurs in the context of significant relationships (Josselson, 1988).

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Perspectives on African American female's development similarly note the importance of connectedness. Collins (1990), for example, maintains that African American women tend to affirm their sense of self through their relationships with others. Collins further contends that through friendships and mother-daughter relationships, African American females are nurtured and empowered. Therefore, although African American females contend with the duality of race and gender, like most females they similarly experience their development of the self while embedded in close relationships. In order to more specifically understand how race and socioeconomic status are related to attachment and self-esteem in females, this study exclusively focused on female college students' perceptions of themselves, their competencies, and their relationships with significant others (i.e., parents and peers).

The present study examined the following questions 1) Are there racial differences related to a female's attachment to her parents and peers as measured by the Inventory of Parent and Peer Attachment (Armsden & Greenberg, 1987)? 2) Are there racial differences related to an female's self-esteem score as measured by the Self-Perception Profile for College Students (Neemann & Harter, 1986)? 3) Do the components of self-esteem (i.e., job, scholastic, social, appearance, parent relationships, close friendships, intellectual ability, morality, romantic relationships, humor, creativity, or athletic) differentiate between African American and White female students as measured by the Self-Perception Profile for College Students (Neemann & Harter, 1986)? 4) Do those females who exhibit higher levels of self-esteem, as measured by the Self-Perception Profile for College Students (Neemann & Harter, 1986), also exhibit higher levels of

attachment to both their parents and peers, as measured by Inventory of Parent and Peer Attachment (Armsden & Greenberg, 1987)? 5) Will females exhibit higher levels of attachment to their mothers than to their fathers and as measured by the Inventory of Parent and Peer Attachment (Armsden & Greenberg, 1987) and does this differ by race?

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Parent-adolescent relationships

Attachment has been defined as an affectional bond, or sense of trust in the accessibility and responsiveness of the parental attachment figure (Bowlby, 1969). A premise of attachment theory is that individuals at any age need to feel secure in their access to and response from another trusted individual. Security in the parent-child relationship is regulated by a parent's provision of comfort, protection, and support.

According to Ainsworth (1989), attachment is a basic system of behavior that is rooted in our biological makeup. Despite the developmental progressions that may impact the intensity of such bonds, individual's needs for attachments remain strong over time. Adolescents may not demand the same amount of physical attachment that infants do, but their need for support and parental commitment remains crucial to their development (Bretherton, 1991; Weiss, 1991). Having the knowledge that a parent is available, accessible, and responsive to her needs, may be more necessary for an adolescent's secure sense of self than being in close proximity to her parents. Therefore, the emotional or psychological aspect of the parent-adolescent relationship may be more important than the physical dimension of attachment during adolescence (Greenberg, Siegel & Leitch, 1983; Rice, 1990).

Current research on adolescent-parent relationships has supported the belief that it is important for adolescents, especially females, to maintain, rather than break free of, connections with their parents (Apter, 1990; Gilligan, 1982; Smilansky, 1991; Stern, 1990). This emphasis on connectedness by many researchers is relatively recent in comparison to the duration of time scholars viewed adolescence as a time of conflict and separation (Freud, 1938; Blos, 1962, 1979). Much of the research on female adolescents and their parents tends to incorporate this notion of attachment, which according to Chodorow (1978) has its origin in female socialization. Chodorow contends that primarily being raised by a mother has a direct impact on the source of a female's attachment. Females perceive themselves as similar to their mothers and combine the experiences of attachment and identity formation into one developmental task. Males, on the other hand, define themselves as separate from their mothers and experience a more distinct sense of individuation than do females. Rather than seeking attachments to their mothers, sons attempt to protect their masculinity by seeking boundaries, while at the same time females strive for such attachments.

Gilligan (1982) also suggested that women define themselves in the context of relationships and place high value on their ability to care for others, while men devalue notions of care and concern about relationships. Validations of the actual, as opposed to the expected, developmental characteristics of female adolescents have been an intense focus for Gilligan. Her examination of female attributes was conducted as a counter to another commonly accepted moral developmental theory, that of Lawrence Kohlberg (1981, 1984). Kohlberg's theory was based primarily on male development. Gilligan's

findings suggested that females' developmental progression differed from that of males and that females were more bound to and defined by the relationships they maintained with others than were males.

Several studies have corroborated this notion of females seeking attachments by specifically examining the relationships of female adolescents and their parents. In his study of 12 to 15 year-old adolescent females, Niles (1979) initially based his research on the premise that adolescents tend to distance themselves from their parents and begin to develop strong ties to their peers because of a need to establish autonomy. In spite of this assumption, Niles found that the subjects were significantly more parent-oriented than peer-oriented, contrary to the common belief that most adolescents dissolved emotional ties with their parents. Peers in this study were identified as being less important than parents, particularly mothers.

Other research on parent-adolescent interactions (Youniss & Smollar, 1985) concluded that the relationship between the father and daughter lacked the emotional aspect that is present within the mother-daughter relationship. Youniss and Smollar also reported that father-daughter relationships lack understanding whereas the mother-daughter interactions display trust. Despite the differing findings between the parent-adolescent relationships, the overall conclusion was that most adolescents maintained connections with, as well as respect and appreciation, for their parents.

Another study of female adolescents suggested the importance of relational contexts for females (Stern, 1990). Stern contended that separation and connection were compatible and necessary individual characteristics, especially in establishing an adolescent

female's future capacity to love. Stern concluded that these opposing elements facilitated individual development.

Gilligan's (1990) results concurred with those of Stern. Her discussion also focused on the female adolescent's need to make connections with others even while facing relationship problems. Gilligan insisted that female adolescents are likely to "fight" for and to maintain their connections with others (1990, p. 20). It can be inferred from this research that for adolescent females the task of interconnectedness has been more essential than obtaining a new sense of separateness from one's family.

Another major research project studying adolescent females and their parental relationships was conducted by Apter (1990). This study included 65 mother-daughter pairs from both Britain and the United States. Apter began her research based on the assumption that females, like males, normally proceeded through a time of separation from their parents. Her task was to more clearly understand how the female adolescent progressed through such a stage. However, her results depicted disparities from what she had expected. Most of the mothers, as well as the daughters in her study, reported feeling satisfied in their relationships with one another. Apter explained that conflict existed in some parent-adolescent relationships because of the adolescent's need to gain a new sense of self distinct from others, and her need for love, respect, and acceptance of this transformation. Therefore, a strong mother-daughter relationship during adolescence was not a weakness, but a source of strength and validation of independence. According to Apter, preserving the attachment between the mother and the daughter was the foundation to this relationship, and just as other findings indicated, the female does not sever ties with

her parents, rather she continues to perceive her new self in the context of her familial relationships.

When first proposed, individuation was defined as adolescents' development of a distinctiveness from their parents in an attempt to develop more self-responsibility (Blos, 1962). The process of adolescent individuation was initially considered a time of separation and emotional distancing from one's parents. Contemporary research on adolescence, however, has suggested the importance and frequency of connectedness or attachment in adolescent-parent relationships (Apter, 1990; Armsden & Greenberg, 1987; Gilligan, 1982, 1990; Greenberg et al. 1983; Grotevant & Cooper, 1986; Rice, 1990; Rosenbaum, 1993; Stern, 1990; Zilbach, 1993). The healthy parent-adolescent relationship will tolerate the adolescent's expression of autonomy but will also provide support and validation for the adolescent's sense of self (Lopez & Gover, 1993).

Female college students and attachment

Much of the research on female college students has also focused on issues of connectedness or attachment. Josselson (1988), for instance, whose work focused on women, contended that while late adolescents form new connections to others, they simultaneously maintain old attachments. Furthermore, Josselson suggested that as adolescents mature, their parental relationships take on characteristics of interdependency and revised connectedness. Kaplan and Klein's (1985) self-in-relation model further maintains that a women's development of the self is accomplished while preserving emotional ties with parents. Therefore, most of the work in the area of female college student development is centered around issues of attachment similarly to the adolescent

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development research.

Although attainment of autonomy has been considered an important task during early adulthood (Erikson, 1963), recent research (e.g., Straub, 1987; Straub & Rodgers, 1986; Taub & McEwen, 1991) has refuted this contention. These researchers have argued that for women, relationships, rather than autonomy, are a primary focus throughout the lifespan. Recent findings by Taub (1995) have indicated that strong interpersonal relationships were a predictor of autonomy development for those females in her racially diverse sample. These results again substantiated the claim that solid connections with others facilitate the individual's development of autonomy.

Additional research focusing on college student development also has depicted a positive relationship between attachment, social competence, and adjustment to college (Bell, Avery, Jenkins, Feld, & Schoenrock, 1985; Blustein, Walbridge, Friedlander, & Palladino, 1991). Kenny and Donaldson's (1992) findings further confirmed that female college students describe their parental relationships as close on the one hand, but also supportive of autonomy on the other. If the females reported problems in terms of college student development in Kenny and Donaldson's study, there were also problems with parental relationships reported. The problems associated with parental relationships were more in terms of feelings of anxiety, guilt, or resentment, that Kenny and Donaldson argued were not representative of healthy parent-student attachments.

Previous work also by Kenny and Donaldson (1991) comparing men and women's attachments to their parents found that women were more attached than were men. Women, in this predominately White sample of college students, indicated that their

attachments to their parents were positive and supportive. These findings were consistent with additional work by Calloni and Handal (1992) that examined gender differences in paternal attachment. This study found significantly higher maternal attachment scores for women than for men. Again, these findings support the self-in-relation model of Kaplan and Klein (1985) that maintains that women remain connected to others throughout the development of the self.

Literature has recently suggested that the formation of a secure attachment will facilitate the individuation process and contribute to a healthy sense of individuality, (de Jong, 1992; Lopez & Gover, 1993) and sense of self (Paterson, Pryor & Field, 1995). Healthy resolution of developmental tasks, such as individuation, can occur in the context of healthy parental attachment relationships (Allison & Sabatelli, 1988; Grotevant & Cooper, 1986; Ryan & Lynch, 1989), and may contribute to a positive sense of self or self-esteem.

Research has suggested that securely attached adolescents experience their parents as emotionally accepting and supportive of their autonomy and that this acceptance leads to more positive feelings about the self (Ryan & Lynch, 1989). Furthermore, studies have found there to be a positive relationship between college students' personal and academic adjustment and secure attachment (Kenny & Donaldson, 1992) and social competence and psychological well-being and attachment (Kenny & Donaldson, 1991). Based on these findings, it is important to view this process of autonomy-seeking in the context of parental attachment and to further consider the characteristics of secure and insecure attachments.

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Characteristics of adolescent attachment

Much of the research in the area of attachment has focused on individual differences or characteristics of securely and insecurely attached children (Ainsworth, 1989). Initially, observation of the parent-infant relationship was the primary focus. With the increase of interest in parent-adolescent attachment, researchers have developed hypotheses about the characteristics of secure and insecure adolescent attachment.

Much of the research in the area of adolescent attachment has centered on the dimensions of competence and self-esteem. Bowlby (1969, 1982) suggested that those individuals who exhibited greater social and emotional adjustment and self-confidence were more likely to be securely attached to a parent. Likewise, insecurely attached adolescents were more apt to exhibit less competence and view the world as unpredictable and threatening. For adolescents, confidence in the accessibility and responsiveness of a parent is of critical importance, because as adolescents mature, they need to be able to cope without the physical presence of the parent and to internalize their parents' emotional availability even when outside their immediate environment.

The importance of a sense of confidence in parental commitment was supported in the research by Paterson et al. (1995). They contended that confidence in parental commitment is critical to self-esteem. Specifically, they found that the quality of attachment toward both mothers and fathers was related to adolescent self-esteem and coping ability. Research by Greenberg et al. (1983) further supported the premise that quality of attachment is related to the well-being, or ability to cope with stress. In their sample they found the adolescents to be more attached to their parents than to their peers,

which further highlights the importance of parental attachment.

Research specifically examining the relationship between attachment and self-esteem has also been conducted. Armsden and Greenberg (1987) found that adolescents who were securely attached to their parents reported less negative life changes and higher self-esteem than those who were insecurely attached. The notion of psychological well-being was further examined by Raja, McGee and Stanton (1992) who found that this characteristic was related to adolescents' perceived levels of attachment to parents and peers. These findings were indicative of the fact that satisfying relationships (those that were based on a secure attachment) with both parents and peers may be necessary for the development of positive self-esteem.

The notion of perceived social support was further assessed by Blain, Thompson, and Whiffen (1993). They found that insecure attachment was associated with lower perceived support from both family and peers. Additional research by Weiss (1991) also noted that attachment was an important factor in the adolescent's ability to maintain feelings of security and emotional stability. Furthermore, in Armsden, McCauley, Greenberg, Burke and Mitchell's (1990) research securely attached adolescents were found to be less likely to exhibit severe forms of depression.

Discussion on attachment by Ryan and Lynch (1989) has corroborated the importance of self-worth or value and notions of attachment. They found in their study that adolescents who felt more detached from others viewed themselves as less valuable or worthy, which is related to one's self-esteem. Their discussion further confirmed the importance of defining adolescent development in terms of continuation of attachment

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rather than by the severing of emotional bonds.

In their discussion of adolescent self-esteem, Lackovic-Grgin et al., (1994) hypothesized that it was the interaction with significant others that influenced self-esteem. They suggested that qualities such as acceptance and nurturance had an impact on one's self-esteem. Their findings indicated that higher self-esteem was positively correlated with such qualities in the parent-adolescent relationship. Adolescents in their study who exhibited lower self-esteem had parents who were more controlling and punitive.

Research by Kenny, Moilanen, Lomax, and Brabeck (1993) further substantiated the relationship between attachment and psychological functioning. These researchers contended that parental attachment during infancy and early childhood functions as a foundation for the internal working model of self. In other words, one's view of the self is affected by the internal representation of the attachment figure. Positive perceptions of the relationship with one's parents in this study contributed to lower levels of depression in White adolescents. Kenny and Donaldson's (1991) research on female and male college students also confirmed that those women who described parental relationships as supportive also reported higher levels of social competence and psychological well-being.

Another study in this area focused on the relationship of significant others and adolescent well-being (Cotterell, 1992). The findings in this research were also based on a sample of White male and female adolescents. Cotterell attempted to tie together the research on social support and attachment, and found significant correlations between attachments to parents and positive feelings of self for both males and females. These findings again substantiated the association between adolescent feelings of attachment and

self-esteem. However these results are not very generalizable as they are based on a small sample of White adolescents

Self-esteem

Studies on self-esteem among female populations have been widespread, and the phenomenon of females exhibiting lower self-esteem than their male counterparts has been repeatedly established. One perspective on the gender disparities in self-esteem is based on the notion that females develop a sense of powerlessness because they internalize their experiences of exclusion in the classroom, the playground, and the textbooks, and they come to realize how males are more valued and allotted more privilege in our society (Wellesley College AAUW Report, 1992, Orenstein, 1994, Sadker & Sadker, 1994)

The American Association of University Women (AAUW) report on 3000 adolescent males and females specifically noted the marked decrease in girls' self-esteem and confidence as they progressed into adolescence. In comparison to boys, the AAUW indicated that girls' sense of self drops, and that their expectations and confidence in themselves and their abilities plummets in comparison to boys. These findings point directly to this notion of girls' internalizing their negative school experiences and developing a lowered sense of self.

The importance of parenting style on self-esteem has been another area of research. Harper and Marshall (1991), for instance, hypothesized that if females were more restricted by their parents, they would tend to exhibit lower self-esteem. Harper and Marshall's results indicated that females displayed lower self-esteem than did males. They contended that as females searched for an identity, they may become confused about the

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expectations placed upon them. These expectations may be related to the family environment since the females who exhibited lower self-esteem tended to also indicate unsupportive or problematic family lives. These findings further corroborated the link between attachment and quality of parental relationships, but also suggest the importance of more clearly understanding female self-esteem.

Research has also been conducted to examine self-esteem in college students. Mitchell and Fandt's (1995) research, for example, looked more closely at the impact of gender, race, major, and type of institution. Gender differences in self-esteem were not found to be significant, however; race did appear to play a role in one's self-esteem. Findings indicated that White respondents reported higher self-esteem than did non-White participants. Mitchell and Fandt argued that these findings were a function of the institution the students were enrolled in. Previous research by Fleming (1984), for example, maintained that African American students who were enrolled in predominately White colleges exhibited lower self-esteem than those enrolled in predominately African American colleges.

Another study that focused on racial differences in autonomy and intimacy was conducted by Taub and McEwen (1991). From their results they also concluded that African American students were impacted by the institution they attended. Due to the fact that White participants scored higher on the intimacy scale than did African Americans, Taub and McEwen contended that African American females had fewer opportunities to develop relationships on predominately White campuses than did White females.

Another proposed theory on the social factors related to adolescent self-esteem

can be found in the work of Dukes and Martinez (1994). These researchers suggested that sexual and racial discrimination impacts self-esteem in females. In their discussion, Dukes and Martinez noted that the socialization of females both in the home and at school may contribute to this lowered self-esteem. Furthermore, they contended that despite the continued focus on self-esteem, gender, and race in the research, there is inadequate emphasis on how these variables interact with one another. These findings further suggested the importance of more clearly understanding how race may impact female adolescent self-esteem.

The impact of race on self-esteem

Studies comparing adolescent self-esteem from varying racial backgrounds have been conducted, but have found inconsistent results. Early research by Clark and Clark (1947) depicted the damaging effects of race on self-esteem. In their study with young children they found that African Americans preferred lighter-skinned dolls, pictures, or puppets rather than those with darker brown skin. This research paved the way for additional studies that tried to further examine the relationship between self-esteem and race.

Research by Richman, Clark, and Brown (1985), for example, found that adolescent Caucasian females and those individuals of lower socioeconomic status (SES) exhibited lower self-esteem than did African American and higher SES females. Hines and Berg-Cross (1981) also found in their study with 7th grade students that African American adolescents' self-esteem was more positive than that of the Caucasian participants.

Further research examining racial differences in self-esteem was conducted by

Kohr, Coldiron, Skiffington, Masters and Blust (1988). Their findings indicated that, for 5th grade students, the White participants exhibited higher self-esteem, but for 11th graders, African Americans had higher scores than their White counterparts. This research addressed not only the possible differences in self-esteem among varying races, but also the possible impact on self-esteem as the adolescents progressed in age.

Hughes and Demo's (1989) discussion on the self-perceptions of adolescents pointed to the notion that self-esteem among African Americans is highly related to family, peer, and community support, and that appraisals from these sources affect self-esteem more in African Americans than they do for White adolescents. So, rather than the larger societal context these authors noted that the smaller community, which included family, friends and religious connections, was more important to one's self-esteem especially for African-Americans.

Contradictory discussion about African American females by Robinson and Ward (1991), however, noted that in order for adolescents to maintain a positive sense of self, they needed to distance themselves from those in their immediate family and community environments. This distancing, Robinson and Ward contended, was a survival mechanism that was necessary in order for them to handle the "contempt from others and the self" that resulted from negative media and societal portrayals of them (1991, p. 91). Research by Jensen, White and Galliher (1982) also attempted to analyze the relationship between ethnic status and self-evaluations among adolescents. Their findings with a sample of African American and Chicano adolescents indicated that although both groups perceived mistreatment from others, they did not similarly exhibit negative self-evaluations. Jensen

et al. contended that ethnic status did not have a significant impact on perceptions of the self.

In another study by Osborne and LeGette (1982) findings also were contradictory. This research focused on gender, race, grade, and SES factors related to self-concept. Osborne and LeGette gathered their data on a predominately White male and female adolescent sample. Their findings indicated significantly lower self-concept scores for African American and lower SES adolescents, and that these adolescents tended to view themselves as less academically and socially capable than did the White adolescents. Osborne and LeGette noted that self-concept scores could be negatively impacted by an adolescent's social status and race.

Further research by Martinez and Dukes (1991) examined several ethnic groups' satisfaction with the self. They found that, overall, females reported lower levels of self-esteem than did males. When comparing the groups, results indicated that Asian Americans scored lowest, followed by Whites, Native Americans, African Americans, and Chicanos. However, when comparing one's private versus public self-esteem, findings suggested that for African Americans and Chicanos, public self-esteem was lower. These authors further contended that self-esteem in a constantly changing dimension, and that it may be significantly impacted by sexism and racism.

Studies examining the impact of race on self-esteem have often focused on body image (e.g., Dolan, 1991; Smith & Krejci, 1991). Investigations in this area have consistently noted that African American females tend to have lower prevalence of eating disorders than Whites (Dolan, 1991; Gray, Ford & Kelly, 1987; Gross & Rosen, 1988)

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and that African Americans have maintained less rigid body image ideals than White females (Thomas & James, 1988).

Smith, Burlew, and Lundgren (1991) also examined this phenomenon. Their findings indicated that African American females who were satisfied with their overall appearance also reported higher levels of self-esteem. These researchers also looked at the concept of African American consciousness as related to self-esteem, but they found no significant relationship between these two variables.

Research by Akan and Grilo (1995) explored body image among a racially diverse population, and found that lower self-esteem was related to public self-consciousness and higher levels of eating and dieting disorders. These findings corroborated with previous research suggesting that African Americans had higher body satisfaction than their White counterparts. Rucker and Cash's (1992) findings also corroborated with the notion that African American females evaluate their bodies more positively than do White females. Whites in their study reported greater body dissatisfaction and more distress about their body size. The authors speculated that these results may be related to the fact that African American females are less influenced by the White culture's standards of beauty than they are by their own family and community.

In his review of the literature, Rosenberg (1979) noted that the research comparing racial differences in self-esteem was based on the premises of reflected appraisals and social comparisons. The reflected appraisal premise assumes that self-esteem is based on the attitudes of others toward the self, and that if individuals are viewed negatively by others it would follow that they would eventually adopt this negative self-perception. The

social comparison premise suggests that people in lower SES and racially diverse groups will exhibit lower self-esteem because of the comparisons they make of themselves to those individuals in the higher SES groups. Rosenberg noted that despite these assumptions, research is not supporting the fact that African Americans and/or lower SES groups exhibit lower self-esteem.

In his discussion of self-concept, Rosenberg (1979) assessed the significance of race and SES. Rosenberg posited that a child's self-concept is impacted by both the immediate environment (i.e., family members, peers and neighborhood) and by the broader social context. He noted that social status was perceived differently for children than it is for adults, and that children exist in classless environments in which status has little or no impact. Rosenberg suggested that since children attend school in more socioeconomically homogenous environments there are less notable differences in self-esteem.

The explanation Rosenberg offered to support the fact that African American and lower SES individuals do not demonstrate lower self-esteem than Whites and higher SES groups is based on several factors. In order for self-esteem to be impacted by race and SES, Rosenberg contended that the individual needed to 1) be aware of how the broader social context perceives his/her group; 2) accept society's perception of his/her group; 3) believe the perception applied specifically to him/her, and; 4) be critically concerned about and view the perceptions as significant. Rosenberg proceeded to challenge these assumptions by suggesting that even though lower SES individuals are aware of society's negative perceptions, they only live in a small segment of society in which reality may differ considerably from the larger social context. Simply being aware of negative

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perceptions, Rosenberg posited, does not assume an acceptance of them. Furthermore, society's perception is independent of the feelings toward oneself, since people outside of one's personal context have relatively little impact on these feelings. Rosenberg argued that although African American individuals do engage in social comparisons, just as White individuals do, these comparisons are with individuals in their own group, rather than those outside (i.e., African American adolescents compare themselves with other African American adolescents, and White adolescents compare themselves with other White adolescents). These types of social comparisons, Rosenberg contended, explain the lack of evidence that exists for lower levels of self-esteem among African Americans and those in lower SES groups.

In order to look more closely at within-group differences in self-esteem, Luster and McAdoo (1995) studied African Americans from low SES families. The premise of their study was based on their contention that African Americans use each other, rather than the White culture, as a reference group, and therefore it is less useful to compare differences between Whites and African Americans than simply between African Americans. Their findings with 19-year-olds indicated that those individuals who reported their families as supportive and approving of their behavior had higher self-esteem than those with unsupportive families. Furthermore, 15-year-olds also exhibited higher self-esteem when they perceived their families as supportive of the kind of person they turned out to be. In addition, when Luster and McAdoo examined economic independence in African Americans they found that those individuals who were moving towards autonomy were more likely to exhibit higher self-esteem than their more financially dependent

counterparts.

Additional research examining racial factors related to self-esteem have focused on the issue of racial identity. According to several researchers (e.g., Jones, 1990; McEwen, Roper, Byant, & Langa, 1990; Moore & Upcraft, 1990) racial identity is significant to college student development. Studies on racial identity have been grounded in the work of Cross (1971) who suggested that African Americans undergo a series of stages including pre-encounter, encounter, immersion-emersion, and internalization, that begin with degrading oneself for being African American and conclude with feeling secure with oneself and one's racial identity. This model is also consistent with previous work that maintained that African Americans proceed from low to high self-esteem while coming to terms with oneself.

Research has specifically examined the relationship between the racial identity as measured by the Cross (1971) model and self-esteem. Parham and Helms (1985), for example, found that during the early stage of racial identity (pre-encounter), which is characterized by the individual viewing the world through a Euro-American perspective and lessening the value of being African American, individuals tend to exhibit lower levels of self-esteem. Once the individual was in the encounter stage and begins to abandon these more White values, positive self-esteem became more evident in this study. Having pride in one's racial identity, then, was associated in this study with more positive self-esteem.

These findings were consistent with those of Pyant and Yanico's (1991) who examined racial identity and psychological health in African American women. Findings in

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this study indicated that those women who endorsed more pro-White, and anti-Black perspectives exhibited lower levels of self-esteem than those who had more pride in their racial identity.

Additional work by Taub and McEwen (1992) also analyzed the relationship between racial identity and psychosocial development in college students. Results from this study indicated an inverse relationship between psychosocial development and racial identity specifically for African American women. The researchers contended that African American women had to contend with developing autonomy and interpersonal relationships while at the same time working on issues of racial identity. Racial identity for African Americans, then, may precede psychosocial development.

Further corroboration of the relationship between self-esteem and racial identity can be found in Phinney and Alipuria's (1990) work. Their study examined ethnic identity with three minority groups as compared to a group of White students. The results indicated a strong relationship between ethnic identity and self-esteem. Phinney and Alipuria maintained that self-esteem for ethnic minorities is based on whether one has positively dealt with his/her own racial identity.

Previous research conducted by Evans (1997) indicated that when analyzing socioeconomic differences by using a student's financial aid status as an indicator, college women who received no financial aid reported stronger attachment to their mothers than did those who received aid. This study indicated a significant correlation between parental relationships and receiving financial aid, with those students receiving no aid reporting higher levels of competence in terms of parental relationships than those who received aid.

Conclusion

The previous discussion focused on female parental relationships, attachment, and self-esteem. A review of the literature suggested evidence of an association between parental attachment and self-esteem. Factors related to self-esteem, such as body image and racial identity, were also considered. However, the studies that have been conducted in this area have not substantiated the racial influences on these two dimensions. Research has attempted to discern how racial and socioeconomic status relates to self-esteem, but the results have been contradictory. Typically studies have been based predominately on White samples, and therefore cannot be generalized.

Due to the inconsistent findings and the lack of heterogeneous sampling in previous research, it was noted that further studies focusing on the influence of race on self-esteem among more diverse populations would be beneficial. In addition, it was illustrated that there has been a lack of research examining the impact of attachment on self-esteem among racially diverse populations. Therefore, specific focus on these populations is necessary in order to specifically understand attachment and self-esteem in female students of all backgrounds.

METHODOLOGY

Sample

The participants in this study were recruited on a volunteer basis from two local 4-year colleges. One of the colleges used for this study was a historically Black college, while the other was a predominately White, urban institution with approximately 25%

African American students. The sample consisted of 139 female students, of which 37 (26.6%) were age 19, 34 (24.5%) were age 20, 29 (20.9%) were age 21, 17 (12.2%) were age 22, 13 (9.4%) were age 18, and 9 (6.5%) were age 23. In regard to the racial breakdown of the sample, 75 (54.0%) were White while 64 (46.0%) were African American. Findings indicated that the majority of students in this sample were sophomores and juniors in college. Furthermore, parental income was most commonly reported as between $50,000 and $99,999 annually. According to this sample, student yearly income was either between $1000 and $2999 or $5000 and $7499. Approximately equal numbers of students in this sample reported receiving and not receiving financial aid. The most commonly reported education levels for mothers and fathers in this sample was having at least a high school degree.

Procedures

Instructors of education courses were selected at the two colleges. All students in the classes were asked to participate. Questionnaires completed by males or females who were older than age 23 were not analyzed in this study. The purpose of this study was announced by a doctoral student or instructor in the classes selected. In order to avoid possible bias, the name of the primary investigator was not given prior to filling out the questionnaires. The participants were informed on the nature of the study, assured about the anonymity of their responses, and then asked to fill out a consent form. Once consent was given, the students proceeded to fill out the questionnaire, which took approximately 20 minutes to complete.

Measures

Two main instruments were incorporated in this study to examine female attachment and self-esteem. In addition to these instruments, demographic information such as the students' age, grade in school, and racial category was included on the questionnaire. Socioeconomic status was assessed by obtaining information about the education and income level of the students' parents and the students' themselves. Income levels used to assess socioeconomic status followed those proposed by the National Center for Education Statistics (Ingels, Dowd, Baldridge, Stipe, Bartot, & Frankel, 1994). To further determine socioeconomic status, the students also were asked whether they currently received financial aid.

In order to examine attachment, the Instrument of Parent and Peer Attachment or IPPA (Armsden & Greenberg, 1987) was used. The IPPA is a self-report instrument designed to assess the cognitive and affective dimensions of adolescents relationships with their parents and close friends (Armsden & Greenberg, 1987). Initial internal reliabilities (Cronbach's alpha) for the IPPA were indicated as .87, .89, and .92 for the mother, father, and peer scales respectively. Subsequent research by Blain et al. (1993) further indicated internal consistency coefficients of .95 for both mother and father attachment, and .93 for peer attachment. For the current study, reliabilities for the IPPA were noted as .96, .96, and .94 for the mother, father, and peer scales respectively.

The IPPA includes a total of 75 questions consisting of 25 questions each about the adolescent's mother, father, and close peers. The instrument uses a 5-point Likert-scale format with responses for each statement ranging from almost never or never true

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(1) to almost always or always true (5). Examples of items include, "I can count on my mother when I need to get something off my chest"; "I feel it's no use letting my feelings show around my father"; or "My friends understand me."

The second instrument used in this study, which examined adolescent self-esteem, was the Self-Perception Profile for College Students or SPPCS (Neemann & Harter, 1986). This scale is a revised version of Harter's original Perceived Competence Scale for Children. The SPPCS purports to measure judgements of competence or adequacy in creativity, intellectual ability, scholastic competence, job competence, athletic competence, physical appearance, romantic relationships, social acceptance, close friendships, parent relationships, humor, morality, and global self-worth and is designed for college students ages 18-23. There are four items for each of the thirteen subscales, and a separate mean score for each subscale was determined. The global self-worth subscale consists of six items of which a mean score will also be computed. Items are presented in a structured, alternative format to minimize the tendency for socially desirable responses. For each question, the student was presented with two descriptions of students and then asked to decide which group she was most like. After determining which group she was most like, the student decided whether that description was sort of true or really true for her. Examples of statements include "some students like the kind of person they are" and "other students wish that they were different." Responses were scored on a 4-point scale with the highest score indicative of the most competent response. For this sample, subscale reliabilities for each domain ranged from .51 (feelings of competency on the job) to .92 (feelings of competency about one's appearance).

In addition to attachment and self-esteem, this study examined the impact of socioeconomic status. In order to measure socioeconomic status, a SES scale was developed. This scale was created by summing after standardizing scores from the questions on total family or parental yearly income, and the mother and father's education level. For this sample, the reliability of the SES scale was indicated as .60, which for the purpose of this study was determined to be adequate.

RESULTS

This study was an assessment of the relationship between attachment to mother, father, and peers, and self-esteem. The possible impact of race on these dimensions was also considered. Data for this study were obtained via completed questionnaires from 139 White and African American female college students in the southern portion of the United States. Questions for this analysis were derived from the Instrument of Parent and Peer Attachment or IPPA (Armsden & Greenberg, 1987) and from the Self-Perception Profile for College Students or SPPCS (Neemann & Harter, 1986). Additional demographic information including age, race, grade level, total family income, student income, financial aid status, and parental education level was also included on the questionnaire.

Overview of Nature of the Data

An overview of the data included a racial comparison of attachment and self-esteem mean scores. The results of t-tests for differences between the mean attachment scores to mothers and peers for White and African American students were not significant. However, when comparing the attachment to fathers between White and African American females, t-test results indicated a significant difference, $t\ (133) = 3.93$, $p < .01$.

A comparison of racial differences among the self-esteem variables was also conducted. Results of t-tests indicated that there were significant differences between White and African American female students' feelings of competency in terms of their parental relationship, t (130) = 2.80 $p < .01$, their friendships, t (130) = 2.88 $p < .01$, and their romantic relationships t (130) = 2.08 $p < .05$. In all three of these categories, Whites scored higher than African Americans.

Analyses of Research Questions

Research Question 1: Are there racial differences related to a female's attachment to her parents and peers?

In order to examine for racial differences in terms of attachment, t-tests were calculated. The results of t-tests for differences between the mean attachment scores to mothers and peers for White and African American students were not significant. When comparing the attachment to fathers between White and African American females, however, t-test results indicated a significant difference, t (133) = 3.93, $p < .01$. Mean paternal attachment scores for White and African Americans were 3.81 and 3.13 respectively (see table 2).

Research Question 2: Are there racial differences related to an female's global self-esteem score?

In order to examine racial differences in terms of global self-esteem, t-tests were administered. This analysis tested for significant differences between the mean global self-esteem score for White and African American females. Results indicated there to be no significant differences between the mean global self-worth scores for White and African

American females in this study

Further results of t-tests indicated that there were significant differences between White and African American female students' feelings of competency in terms of their parental relationship, t (130) = 2.80 $p < .01$, their friendships, t (130) = 2.88 $p < .01$, and their romantic relationships t (130) = 2.08 $p < .05$. In all three of these categories, Whites scored higher than African Americans (see table 3).

Research Question 3: Do the components of self-esteem (i.e., job, scholastic, social, appearance, parent relationships, close friendships, intellectual ability, morality, romantic relationships, humor, creativity, or athletic) differentiate between African American and White female students?

In order to examine racial differences, a discriminant analysis was conducted to examine the dimensions along which the groups differed. For the purpose of this analysis, the 12 self-esteem variables were separated into two main categories, and thus two separate discriminant analyses were conducted. The first analysis focused on social or relationship dimensions of self-worth, and included job competence, social competence, parental relationships, close friendships, and romantic relationships. Results indicated that the racial groups differed significantly at the .01 level on this particular set of variables, with the Wilks' Lambda significant (Lambda = .860, F = 4.07, df = 5, 125, $p < .001$). Table 1 presents the standardized coefficients, correlations, and group centroids of this analysis. As indicated in the table, African American and White females have negative and positive centroids respectively. The standardized coefficients indicate that the two variables most influential in separating the groups along this function or continuum are

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social acceptance and close friendships. The negative coefficient for social acceptance indicates that individuals scoring high on social acceptance would be low on the function or continuum. The positive coefficient for close friendships and parental relationships indicates that the individuals scoring high on these variables would be high on the function. Thus, the positive centroid for White females indicates that they score higher on parental relationships and close friendships than do African American females. The negative centroid for African American females indicates that they score higher on social acceptance than White females. In other words, the White females in this study tended to perceive themselves as more competent in close, interpersonal relationships, while the African American females tended to perceive themselves as more competent on overall social skills.

The next group of variables used for a second discriminant analysis was focused on internal measures of one's self-esteem and included intellectual ability, morality, sense of humor, creativity, athletic competence, scholastic competence, and physical appearance. In this analysis, which focused on internal or evaluative dimensions of self-esteem, results indicated that the racial groups differed significantly at the .02 level on this particular set of variables, and the Wilks' Lambda was significant (Lambda = .871, F = 2.59, df = 7,123, $p < .05$). Table 2 presents the standardized coefficients, correlations, and group centroids of this analysis. As indicated in the table, African American and White females have negative and positive centroids respectively. The standardized coefficients indicate that the three variables most influential in separating the groups along this function or continuum are intellectual ability, scholastic competence, and physical appearance. The

Table 1

Standardized Discriminant Coefficients, Correlations, and Group Centroids for External Self-esteem Measures

	Function 1 (External self-esteem measures)	
	Discrimant Coefficient	Correlation
Job competence	.189	.353
Social acceptance	-.883[1]	-.012
Parental relationships	.527	.576[2]
Close friendships	.766[1]	.624[2]
Romantic relationships	.320	.435

	Group Centroids	
	White Females	African American Females
External self-esteem measures	.357	-.449

[1] Variables influential in differentiating groups

[2] Variables with strongest correlations

Table 2

Standardized Discriminant Coefficients, Correlations, and Group Centroids for Internal Self-esteem Measures

	Function 1 (Internal self-esteem measures)	
	Discrimant Coefficient	Correlation
Intellectual ability	-.644[1]	.015
Morality	.460	.300
Sense of humor	.317	.185
Creativity	-.467	-.346[2]
Athletic competence	.247	.160
Scholastic competence	.985[1]	.434[2]
Physical appearance	-.594[1]	-.310
	Group Centroids	
	White Females	African American Females
External self-esteem measures	.340	-.428

[1] Variables influential in differentiating groups

[2] Variables with strongest correlations

positive coefficients for scholastic competence indicate that individuals high on the function perceive greater scholastic competence. The negative coefficients for intellectual ability and physical appearance indicate that individuals scoring low on the function perceive themselves as having greater intellectual competence and greater acceptance of their physical appearance. The positive centroid for White females indicates that they perceive higher levels of scholastic competence and the negative centroid for African American females indicates that they have higher perceptions of themselves in terms of their intellectual competence and physical appearance.

Research Question 4: Do those females who exhibit higher levels of self-esteem, also exhibit higher levels of attachment to both their parents and peers?

In order to examine the relationship between self-esteem and attachment, bivariate correlations were calculated between attachment and each component of self-esteem as well as the global self-esteem measure. With the exception of creativity and athletic competence, significant positive correlations were found between attachment to mother and all self-esteem variables. This indicates that the higher the levels of self-esteem the greater the attachment to mother. When considering the relationship between attachment to father and self-esteem, significant positive correlations were also noted for all variables except physical appearance and creativity. This again suggests that the higher the levels of self-esteem the higher the attachment to father. Similarly, peer attachment was found to be significantly associated with all variables except creativity and athletic competence, indicating the higher the self-esteem in these domains, the higher the attachment to peers.

Possible racial differences in the relationship between attachment and self-esteem

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were also examined. For African American females, results indicated that significant relationships exist between attachment to mother and the female's physical appearance, parental relationships, intellectual ability, morality, sense of humor, athletic competence, and global self-worth. This suggests that the higher the self-esteem in these areas, the higher the attachment to mother. Significant associations were also found in this group between attachment to father and job competence, physical appearance, parental relationships, intellectual competence, romantic relationships, and global self-worth. Again, this finding indicates that the higher the feelings of competence in these areas, the higher the attachment to father. When considering peer attachment for African American females, significant correlations were found between all self-esteem variables, with the exception of job competence, creativity, and athletic competence. These findings suggest that females with higher self-esteem also will feel higher levels of attachment to their peers.

Significant correlations were also found between attachment and self-esteem for the White subjects in this sample. Attachment to mother was found to be significantly correlated with social competence, parental relationships, close friendships, sense of humor and global self-worth. When considering attachment to father, significant positive associations were noted with job competence, social acceptance, parental relationships, close friendships, intellectual ability, romantic relationships, sense of humor, and global self-worth. The final category of peer attachment also noted some positive correlations. Peer attachment was found to be significantly related to social acceptance, physical appearance, close friendships,

intellectual ability, and global self-worth. In all three of these categories of attachment, results indicate that the higher the feelings of competence or self-esteem, the higher the levels of attachment to mother, father, and peers.

Research Question 5: Will females exhibit higher levels of attachment to their mothers than to their fathers and does this differ by race?

In order to examine the relationship between attachment to mother and attachment to father, a two-factor ANOVA was conducted. Both groups of females tended to indicate higher attachments to their mothers than to their fathers. For the ANOVA analysis, the within factor was attachment while the between factor was race. Results indicated significant racial differences between attachment to mothers and fathers averaged across both types of attachment, $F(1, 133) = 11.60$, $p < .01$. The race by attachment interaction, which indicated that differences in attachment to mother and father depend on whether African Americans or Whites are being examined, was also significant, $F(1,133) = 7.12$, $p < .01$. In order to make pairwise comparisons, post hoc analysis using the Tukey method (Kirk, 1982) found there to be a significant difference between attachment to mother and father for both Whites and African Americans, however the difference was larger for African American females.

DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Introduction

This study attempted to more clearly understand the relationship between attachment and self-esteem in African American and White female college students. The Inventory of Parent and Peer Attachment (Armsden & Greenberg, 1987) was used to

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assess the cognitive or affective dimensions of student's relationships with her parents and close friends. The Self-Perception Profile for College Students (Neemann & Harter, 1986) was used to measure judgements of competence or adequacy in social acceptance, job competence, scholastic competence, physical appearance, parent relationships, close friendships, intellectual ability, morality, romantic relationships, humor, creativity, athletic competence, and global self-worth. Racial comparisons were made between White and African American females.

Summary of the Impact of Race

Results from this study generally supported the hypothesis that the female who identified herself as being attached to her mother, her father, and her peers, was also likely to exhibit higher levels of self-esteem. For all females in the study, all self-esteem variables, except creativity and athletic competence, were found to be significantly associated with attachment to mother, father, and peers. In other words, feelings of self-competence in most of the self-esteem domains considered was associated with feelings of attachment to parents and peers.

When examining the possible impact of race on attachment and self-esteem, findings indicated that for African American females, significant positive relationships existed between attachment to mother and physical appearance, parental relationships, intellectual ability, morality, sense of humor, athletic competence, and global self-worth. Significant positive relationships were also found for African Americans for their attachments to fathers and job competence, physical appearance, parental relationships, intellectual competence, romantic relationships, and global self-worth. Peer attachment

was found to be significantly related to all self-esteem variables except job competence, creativity, and athletic competence. Overall, for African Americans, higher feelings of self-esteem or competency were related to high levels of parental and peer attachment.

For White females, similar findings were noted. Attachment to mother, for instance, was found to be associated with social competence, parental relationships, close friendships, sense of humor, and global self-worth. Attachment to father was indicated as being related to job competence, social acceptance, parental relationships, close friendships, intellectual ability, romantic relationships, sense of humor, and global self-worth. The final category of peer attachment was found to be associated with social acceptance, physical appearance, close friendships, intellectual ability, and global self-worth. These findings again illustrate the important relationship between attachment and self-esteem among female populations.

Results indicated statistically significant differences when comparing White and African American females' attachments to their fathers. Furthermore, both White and African American females differed significantly in their attachments to their mothers and fathers. For both groups of females, attachments to mothers were higher than attachments to fathers, but for African Americans, these differences were more pronounced. In attachment categories (i.e., mother, father, and peer), White females scored higher than African Americans although these findings were not statistically significant.

Further findings indicated that in terms of self-esteem, statistically significant racial differences existed only for the females' feelings of competency in their parental relationships, their close friendships, and their romantic relationships. In all three of these

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categories, White females scored higher than did African American females. In the categories of social acceptance, physical appearance, creativity, and overall global self-worth, African American females scored higher than White females, although these differences were not statistically significant.

When separating out the twelve self-esteem variables into two main groups of external versus internal measures of self-worth, interesting findings occurred. When first examining social measures such as job competence, social acceptance, parental relationships, close friendships, and romantic relationships, findings suggested that African Americans tended to score higher on social acceptance while the White females scored higher on close friendships. This suggests that for this particular sample, African American females felt more competent in terms of their overall social acceptance, or social skills, while White females had more confidence in their close friendships, or their ability to confide in close friends.

When considering internal measures or personal self-evaluations, such as intellectual ability, morality, sense of humor, creativity, athletic competence, scholastic competence, and physical appearance, results indicated that African Americans scored higher on intellectual ability and physical appearance and White females scored higher on scholastic competence. This suggests that African Americans in this study perceived more confidence about their global intelligence and their physical attractiveness. White females, on the other hand, perceived more competence about their scholastic competence, or their ability to master course work in college, rather than overall intelligence. In other words, in the sample, the African Americans perceived themselves to

be more intelligent in a global sense, while the White females perceived themselves as more capable of achieving good grades in various school subjects.

Discussion and Implications of Findings

The findings in this current study may lend support to Bowlby's (1969, 1982) work indicating that those individuals who exhibited greater social and emotional adjustment and self-confidence, both personally and in terms of financial independence, were more likely to be securely attached to a parent. Furthermore, this study supports the work of several researchers (e.g., Armsden & Greenberg, 1987; Bell et al., 1985; Kenny & Donaldson, 1991; Lapsley et al., 1990) who argue that attachment issues are still critical during the college years. Specifically, the students in this current study who reported attachments to their mothers, fathers, and peers reported higher levels of self-esteem in all dimensions of self-worth except creativity and athletic ability. Results suggest that confidence in the accessibility and responsiveness of a parent seems to be of critical importance, especially for developing feelings of self-confidence and competence.

Results from this study also corroborate with the theoretical perspectives of Chodorow (1978), Gilligan (1982, 1990) and Miller (1986), which contended that females are embedded in relationships and defined by their attachments. In addition, the specific work on African American females by Collins (1990), which discussed the importance for African American females to maintain strong connections in order to develop a healthy sense of self, may also be relevant to the findings in this current study. Results illustrated, for instance, that the development of self-worth or confidence is positively related to females' significant attachments.

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Attachment and Self-esteem

Armsden and Greenberg's (1987) research on the relationship between attachment and self-esteem was also consistent with the findings in this study. Their results suggested that those individuals who were securely attached to their parents reported higher self-esteem than those who were insecurely attached. Research on attachment by Ryan and Lynch (1989) also coincided with the findings in this current study. Ryan and Lynch found that individuals who felt more detached from others viewed themselves as less valuable or worthy. Although this study did not specifically examine characteristics of students who were more detached from others, it could be suggested that where associations were not found, the participants felt less competent. Further investigations should examine other categories of attachment (i.e., insecure-avoidant, insecure-resistant) to determine whether there are racial differences in these categories and whether correlations between the various categories of attachment and self-esteem differ.

Furthermore, this study also examined the possible racial differences between attachment to mother and father among female college students. Results indicated that African American females were significantly less attached to their fathers than were White females. Both African American and White females, however, indicated that they were more attached to their mothers than their fathers. These findings are consistent with Apter's (1990) work arguing that females tend to be empowered rather than stifled by their strong relationships with their mothers. These results also corroborate Collins' (1990) work, which contends that African American females tended to be nurtured and empowered through their relationships with their mothers.

In this particular study, it may have been noteworthy to inquire about the household composition of the females surveyed. If more African American females in this sample came from female-headed households, it would follow that their attachments to their fathers would be significantly less than those to their mothers. As Collins (1990) argued, the matriarchal structure in African American culture tends to be correlated with strong mother-daughter relationships. Strong maternal attachments for African American females may be particularly evident, especially if mothers are the only consistent adult figures in the home. In addition, as Chodorow (1978) contended, being raised and nurtured primarily by a mother contributes both to a strong feeling of attachment towards mothers and to a strong sense of the importance of relationships.

financial aid and attachment to mothers.

Self-esteem and Race

Female self-esteem has been a commonly researched phenomenon. Studies that have attempted to discern racial differences (Hines, & Berg-Cross, 1981; Mitchell & Fandt, 1995; Richman, Clark, & Brown, 1985; Taub & McEwen, 1991) have found varying results. With a study specific to female college students it would be erroneous to make assumptions about the results, however, they may be related to some of the findings of previous studies. The research on body image, for example, has consistently depicted African American females as more accepting of their bodies than White females (Akan & Grilo, 1995; Dolan, 1991, Smith & Krejci, 1991; Smith, Burlew, and Lundgren, 1991). Therefore, it was expected that the results of this study would corroborate with these findings.

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When comparing the overall findings of self-esteem scores according to race, some interesting patterns emerged. Results of this study noted that in nine of the 13 self-esteem domains, White participants scored higher than did African Americans. However, in terms of physical appearance, creativity, and global self-worth, African Americans scored slightly higher than Whites. In the category of social acceptance, results indicated that Whites and African Americans scored virtually the same. Although these findings offer interesting patterns, it should be noted that differences were only found to be statistically significant in the categories of parental relationships, close friendships, and romantic relationships. In other words, White females in this study indicated that they felt more comfortable in terms of their ability to get along with their parents, their ability to maintain close friendships, and their ability to develop romantic ties.

As these results illustrate, one's sense of self is comprised of many dimensions and is related to perceptions of self and perceptions of one's interactions with others (Harter, 1988). Furthermore, the findings point to the importance of parental relationships, suggesting that there may be a strong link between one's sense of self and preserving emotional ties with one's parents (Kaplan & Klein, 1985). Furthermore, other findings (e.g., Cotterell, 1992; Lackovic-Grgin et al., 1994), which contended that interactions with others, including parents or friends, had an impact on one's sense of self. Additional differences between African American and White females in terms of self-esteem were not found to be statistically significant and therefore require subsequent studies to substantiate.

When examining the separate categories of self-esteem measured in this study, and

finding racial differences, one might argue that results could be related to the socialization of African American females. As Dukes and Martinez (1994) contended, lower self-esteem among this population could be related to sexual and racial discrimination. However, this argument may not entirely explain the fact that in overall global self-worth, creativity, and physical appearance, African American females did indicate higher levels of self-esteem. These inconsistent findings suggest the need to further investigate this issue of racial differences in self-esteem. In addition, it would be important to determine in further studies whether appraisals from family, peers, and community affect African Americans more than they do Whites. Further examination with larger and more heterogenous samples are necessary in order to make accurate conclusions about these findings.

The findings from the discriminant analyses are also consistent with previous research. This study, for instance, found that African American females perceived themselves more competent in the categories of social acceptance, intellectual competence, and physical appearance. White females, on the other hand, indicated feeling more competence about their close friendships and scholastic competence. These findings corroborate with previous research by Grant (1994) who examined the various behaviors and roles of African American elementary school females. Grant discovered in her qualitative research that African American first graders tended to adopt various social roles in the classroom (i.e., helper, enforcer, go-between) that stress the importance of service and nurturance rather than academic success. Grant argued that by adopting these social roles, African American females were focusing less on their

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academics. Despite the fact that these females were expending less energy on their course work than White females, Grant contended that they were helping to establish social order in the classroom and thus felt more competent about their overall social skills. The problem for these young African American females was that by emphasizing social roles, they tended to neglect their academic work and receive lower grades than their White counterparts.

Although the current study focused on older students, results do suggest that African American females, as in Grant's (1994) research, have higher perceptions of their overall social skills than they do about their academic ability. White females, on the other hand, indicated feeling more competent about their ability to achieve success in their course work than did African American females. Further investigations would need to consider not only the perceptions of competencies, but also subsequent behaviors. Additional studies would need to determine whether perceptions of competencies were consistent with behaviors. Additional research in this area could include qualitative observations, teacher interviews, and possibly an analysis of grades and/or student portfolios.

Implications for Research

More information is needed to further understand all of these results, however, they do suggest the importance of relationships and connectedness in the lives of female adolescents, which is consistent with previous research (Apter, 1990; Collins, 1990; Gilligan, 1982, 1990; Miller, 1986; Stern, 1990). In order to further examine the effects of race and SES on attachment and self-esteem, several recommendations for further

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research could be offered. First, in order to understand how relationships undergo changes and how these changes impact images of the self, longitudinal studies could be conducted. Examining a female's self-esteem over time would be more useful for determining true feelings of competence, as well as levels of attachment in relationships. Measuring changes in self-esteem and attachment over time rather than at a single moment in time, may be the best method for truly understanding these dimensions.

Another recommendation for further research in this area would be to conduct studies on a larger and more diverse population. The current study is not representative of females of diverse communities due to its smaller sample size and focus on specifically female college students. Had this study included a larger, more diverse sample there could have been disparate results due to contextual differences. With more diverse and larger samples one could more accurately explore racial as well as economic differences in levels of self-esteem and attachment.

In addition to conducting research on larger samples, it is important to include the dimension of gender in further studies. An analysis of gender would answer more important questions about the possible societal impact on one's feelings of self-worth. Further research on gender differences would also need to explore the many dimensions of self-esteem that were used in this current study in order to determine if certain domains have differing effects on the self-competence of males and females.

A final recommendation for further research in this area would be to conduct qualitative analysis and/or to include other variables to measure self-esteem and attachment. Examining female depression, anorexia and bulimia, sexual behavior, or

family history of abuse, for example, may provide insight about the attachment process and how it is impacted by other psychological or emotional variables. Research by Pipher (1994), for instance, on female depression and loss of self provides insight that may be useful for further understanding the unique problems of this population. Pipher's research provided more thorough understanding about female adolescents, and offered an unique awareness about female personal and family experiences. Further studies may need to move beyond the questionnaire format and place more emphasis on qualitative analyses in order to fully understand the true dynamics of this population.

This study does not define causal relationships or even definitive correlations between self-esteem and attachment in a racially diverse sample, but its findings do suggest a further need to understand this phenomenon. For all those who have interest in or commitments to the lives of females, this research would suggest that attachment to parents and peers has an important role in one's feelings of self-competence. By including larger and more diverse samples, longitudinal designs, qualitative analyses, and more accurate indicators of self-esteem and SES, research could provide the necessary insight for further understanding the many complexities of female college student development.

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